

# Office of Rural Health Overview

**The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Rural Health (ORH) was founded to innovate unique solutions to address the health care needs of rural Veterans.**

Established by Congress in 2006 ([38 U.S. Code § 7308](#)), ORH fulfills its mission by supporting targeted research, developing innovative programs and identifying new care models for the more than 2.7 million rural Veterans enrolled in the VA health system. Working through its five Veterans Rural Health Resource Centers as well as partners from academia, state and local governments, private industry, and non-profit organizations, ORH strives to break down the barriers separating rural Veterans from quality care.

## Programs

To enable VA to rapidly address systemic health care and access challenges experienced by Veterans in rural communities, ORH funds two categories of programs:

- ▶ **Enterprise-Wide Initiatives** (EWI) expand national VA program offices' health care efforts to sites that serve rural Veterans.
- ▶ **Rural Promising Practices** are field-tested innovative projects that demonstrate improved access to care for rural Veterans.

Together, these programs address ORH's key focus areas (health care workforce shortages, transportation, primary care, mental health, telehealth and specialty care), highlighted by the following EWIs and Rural Promising Practices:



**Tele-Clinical Resource Hubs**  
provide primary care, mental health, and specialty care to Veterans in underserved areas that are experiencing staffing gaps.



**Veteran Transportation Service**  
provides medical transportation services for rural Veterans and funds salaries for drivers and mobility managers as well as vehicle leases.



**Tele-Rehabilitation**  
uses telehealth to deliver physical and rehabilitative therapies to rural Veterans wherever they are.



**Rural Interprofessional Faculty Development Initiative (RIFDI)**  
provides training for residency proctors, enabling them to better train, mentor, and monitor residents serving rural areas.

## ORH Components

- ▶ **Veterans Rural Health Resource Centers (VRHRC)** are ORH's field-based satellite offices which serve as hubs of rural health innovation, located at host VA medical centers in Iowa City, Iowa; Salt Lake City, Utah; White River Junction, Vermont; Gainesville, Florida; and Portland, Oregon.
- ▶ **Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN) Rural Consultants (VRC)** serve as communication conduits between VA Central Office, ORH and VHA field operations. The United States is divided into 18 VISNs, each with a VRC. VRCs advise ORH on matters affecting rural Veterans.

## Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

The Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee (VRHAC) is a chartered federal advisory committee that advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on health care issues affecting rural Veterans. ORH supports VRHAC in its mission to identify health care access barriers facing rural Veterans and provide recommendations to enhance VA's rural health care services.

## VA Partner Offices

ORH collaborates with other VA offices to identify, support and disseminate innovative solutions that address challenges in mental health, primary care, telehealth, workforce development, community engagement and innovation.



**4.7**

million Veterans  
are rural

**7%**

of enrolled rural  
Veterans are women

**25%**

of enrolled rural  
Veterans report  
being racial or  
ethnic minority

**55%**

of enrolled rural  
Veterans are  
65 years or older

**55%**

of enrolled rural  
Veterans earn  
annual income less  
than \$35,000

## Office of Rural Health

The Office of Rural Health (ORH) works to see that America's Veterans thrive in rural communities. To support the health and well-being of rural Veterans, ORH establishes and disseminates Enterprise-Wide Initiatives that increase access to care for the 2.7 million rural Veterans enrolled in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system. Key focus areas include programs that address workforce shortages, transportation, primary care, mental health, telehealth and specialty care. To learn more, visit [www.ruralhealth.va.gov](http://www.ruralhealth.va.gov).

**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Office of Rural Health

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Learn more about ORH at [www.ruralhealth.va.gov](http://www.ruralhealth.va.gov)